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The Invention of Tradition: How Swiss Identity is Manifest in the Evolution of Folksong

by

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## **Abstract**

The development of a culture's identity is a complex and ever changing process. Religious, social, and political factors play key roles in the evolution of a culture's mentality (values, beliefs, and self-image). Folksongs are symbolic representations of this mentality. Thus, studying the folksongs of a particular culture offers insight into that culture's identity. Switzerland has a rich folk music tradition, and has endured almost continual religious, social, and political reforms since its inception. As such, Switzerland provides an ideal context in which to study the impact of the changes in a culture's identity on the evolution of that culture's folksong. This essay discusses the evolution of the Swiss identity and Swiss folksong from a sociopolitical context by outlining the numerous revolutions that spurred political reforms in Switzerland. It discusses the evolution of the Swiss festival culture, and the creation of new, aesthetically-crafted folkloristic compositions that, in turn, prompted the creation of modern traditions. Finally, an analysis of folk melodies and texts will be presented in order to observe different aspects of the Swiss identity manifest in Swiss folksong.



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## Introduction

The development of a culture's identity is a complex and ever changing process. Numerous factors play a role in its development. Religious, social, economic, and political changes alter a culture's mentality (its values, beliefs and self-image). Schelbert observes that a culture's mentality is manifest especially "on social, ritual, or festive occasions."<sup>1</sup> Thus, studying the artistic expressions of a culture offers insight into its identity and how that identity is formed. Mäusli states, "in contrast to linguistic text, music is a particularly suitable indicator of mentalities."<sup>2</sup> Switzerland is a country that has endured almost continual religious, social, and political reforms since its inception in 1291. As such, it is an excellent case study of the evolution of cultural identity. By studying the evolution of Swiss folksong we can understand the effect indigenous music has on the identity of a culture. By studying the music and text of the folksongs themselves, we gain insight into the Swiss mentality. The object of this paper is to discuss the evolution of the Swiss identity and Swiss folksong in a sociopolitical context.

The body of literature that examines the political development of Switzerland is extensive. A few notable sources include discussions of the psychological state of the Swiss with respect to political reforms. Kohn's book *Nationalism and Liberty: The Swiss Example* is one such resource. His study of the development of Swiss nationalism, from the origin of the old Confederation to the declaration of neutrality in both World Wars, provides an ideal historical context in which to discuss the evolving identity of the Swiss

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<sup>1</sup> Leo Schelbert, "Glimpses of an Ethnic Mentality: Six German-Swiss Texts of Migration-Related Folksongs," in *Land Without Nightingales: Music in the Making of German-America*, ed. Phillip Bohlman, and Otto Holzapfel, 73 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Theo Mäusli, "Swiss music scene in the 1930s," in *Music and Nazism: Art Under Tyranny, 1933–1945*. ed. Michael H. Kater, and Albrecht Rietmüller, 259 (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2003).



culture. Kohn's discussions on the effects of the Reformation, Enlightenment, and Napoleonic Era on the minds of the Swiss are particularly useful in establishing a psychological context for the evolution of Swiss folk music.<sup>3</sup>

Zimmer studied the political, economic, and social developments that led to Swiss national unity and paints a different picture of the nature of Swiss nationalism than does Kohn. While Kohn's discussion of Swiss unity "presupposes a static and holistic notion of national identity,"<sup>4</sup> Zimmer's study assumes a more organic view of nationalism. Friedrichs outlines the political structure of the old Swiss Confederation. His research explains the complex social workings of the relationship between cantons and subject lands.<sup>5</sup> These three studies view the nationalistic development of Switzerland from a strictly sociopolitical standpoint. No attempt is made to discuss the influence of the fine arts on Swiss nationalism. According to Schelbert and Mäusli, folk music, as a symbol of a culture's self-image, must be addressed in the discussion of national identity.

The literature that specifically examines the development of the Swiss identity is less extensive than that which studies Switzerland's political reforms. The author, Music, discusses the musical reforms in Switzerland that occurred as a result of the Reformation. However, only briefly does he address the impact of these reforms on Swiss folk music.<sup>6</sup> Conversely, Schelbert's study of migration-related folksong texts focuses solely on the relationship between folksong and national identity. Although limited in scope, Schelbert's study provides an insightful discussion of the manifestation of Swiss

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<sup>3</sup> Hans Kohn, *Nationalism and Liberty: The Swiss Example* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> Oliver Zimmer, "A Contested Nation: History, Memory and Nationalism in Switzerland, 1761–1891," Past and Present Publications, xiv (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Christopher R. Friedrichs, "The Swiss and German City-States," in *The City-State in Five Cultures*, ed. Robert Griffeth and Carol G. Thomas (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1981).

<sup>6</sup> David W. Music, "Swiss Reformed," in *Hymnology: A Collection of Source Readings* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998).



mentality in folksong. Mäusli's study of Switzerland's social climate in pre-World War II Europe provides insight on the subject of Swiss cultural preservation. He discusses the concept of *Geistige Landesverteidigung* (Intellectual National Defense), and considers it the motivation for the revitalization of old Swiss musical traditions. However, Mäusli does not discuss Swiss folk music, or its evolution, with regard to the revitalization of these traditions.<sup>7</sup> Hirsh examines the Swiss government's portrayal of Swiss culture at the World's Fair in Paris at the turn of the twentieth century. Her arguments centre on defining the Swiss identity by analyzing the portrayal of Switzerland in the Swiss visual arts. She outlines the evolution of the Swiss identity since the days of the old Confederation, and discusses the incongruities of the turn-of-the-century Swiss identity with the Confederate Swiss identity. Although Hirsh's book is an exceptional example of a discussion on the evolution Swiss mentality, folk music is excluded from her arguments.<sup>8</sup>

Only a small body of literature examines the development of the Swiss identity with regard to indigenous folksong. Perhaps the most invaluable of these texts is *Schweizer Töne: Die Schweiz im Spiegel der Musik* (Swiss Sounds: Switzerland in the Mirror of Music). A compilation of papers and discourses presented at a Swiss music conference in Lucerne in 1998, *Schweizer Töne* presents research on the evolution of the Swiss identity from a Swiss perspective. Important essays by Baumann and de Capitani delineate the evolution of Swiss culture and folk music over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. De Capitani frames his observations in the context of the

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<sup>7</sup> Mäusli (2003).

<sup>8</sup> Sharon L Hirsh, "Swiss Art and National Identity at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in *Art, Culture, and National Identity in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, ed. Michelle Facos, and Sharon L. Hirsh (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003).



intellectual and sociopolitical revolutions of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Baumann draws parallels between the evolution of the Swiss identity and the evolution of the Swiss festival culture in the nineteenth century. Marchal's closing remarks at the music conference are included as the collection's final article: "Schweizer Töne: Die Sicht des Historikers" (Swiss Sounds: The Views of the Historians). Marchal explores, from a philosophical standpoint, the nature of Swiss music, how the Swiss themselves identify with Swiss music, and those qualities that make Swiss music definitively Swiss. Part of the solution, Marchal intimates, lies in the indigenous nature of the Swiss herdsman's music.<sup>9</sup>

Of the literature concerning the music of the Alpine herdsman, few studies match the importance and depth of the work of Bolle-Zemp. Her book, *Le réenchantement de la montagne: Aspects du folklore musical en Haute-Gruyère* (The Re-Enchantment of the Mountain: Aspects of Musical Folklore in High-Gruyère), provides a study of the music of the Alps from religious, political, technological, socioeconomic, and aesthetic perspectives. The scope of the study, while limited to the Alpine music in the canton of Gruyère, is broad. It comprises several transcriptions and analyses of Swiss cow calls, as well as studies on the impact of choral singing in private and public life. Bolle-Zemp writes briefly on the nature of Swiss traditions; she discusses the economic aims that motivated the revitalization of old folk traditions and the creation of the modern music festival.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Guy P Marchal, "'Schweizer Töne?' Die Sicht des Historikers," in *Schweizer Töne: Die Schweiz im Spiegel der Musik*, ed. Annette Landau (Zurich: Chronos, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Sylvie Bolle-Zemp, *Le Réenchantement de la Montagne: Aspects du Folklore Musical en Haute-Gruyère* (Geneva: Georg Editeur, 1992).



This paper will outline the social, political, and intellectual revolutions that spurred the evolution of the Swiss identity. It will discuss the evolution of the Swiss festival culture in relation to that identity, and the creation of new, aesthetically-crafted folkloristic compositions that prompted the creation of modern traditions. Finally, an analysis of folk melodies and texts will be presented to illustrate different aspects of the Swiss identity manifest in Swiss folksong.

From the French *Annales School* of historiography comes the term *mentalité*, which provides an apt context in which to discuss the changing identity of Switzerland as a whole. *Mentalité* (hereafter referred to as mentality) is defined by Schelbert as “the collective mental and psychological structure of a group that shapes the modes of an individual’s thoughts, feelings, and actions.”<sup>11</sup> Here, the term “group” refers not to a specific class of people, but to a nation as a whole. A population’s mentality, a dynamic emotional state, is that set of beliefs and assumptions upon which it builds its way of life. While a people’s mentality motivates its actions, it is itself continually changed by historical circumstance. In other words, as a population is changed by historical developments, so the beliefs and assumptions that shape its way of life are changed.<sup>12</sup>

The concept of mentality should not be confused with that of nationalism, but instead should be understood as the foundation upon which nationalism is built. “[Nationalism] is an historical phenomenon and thus determined by the political ideas and the social structure of the lands where it takes root.”<sup>13</sup> If nationalism is the devotion to one’s country or social structure, then a people’s mentality is the essence of that

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<sup>11</sup> Schelbert, 72 (2002).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>13</sup> Kohn, 7 (1956).



structure. Cultural identity emerges when a population's nationality is considered in conjunction with its mentality.

A culture's identity finds many and various forms of expression, folksong among them. Folksongs are expressive textual and tonal forms of a people's collectively held thoughts, beliefs, and emotions.<sup>14</sup> Since, as previously mentioned, historical events can change a people's mentality (and, therefore, the expression of that mentality), studying such songs can offer insight into the changing identity of that people. The remainder of this paper will discuss the changes of Switzerland's cultural identity since the inception of the Old Confederation in 1291, with special attention to how these changes are manifest in its folksongs.

The German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder described folk music as "Lieder des Volks" (songs of the people).<sup>15</sup> Its melodies are of unknown authorship, passed down by oral tradition. As will be discussed, the evolution of the Swiss culture endangered the existence of its indigenous folk music. As a result, many composers wrote new music to be integrated into society as folk music. Michael Denis, an Austrian poet, wrote of this situation and presented his philosophy:

Wenn Sie je es versuchen wollen, Ihrem Volke zu dichten, so studieren sie zuerst vorhandene Lieder; fangen sie damit an, dass sie diese Lieder ausbessern, veredeln, ohne im geringsten vom Sinn des Liedes abzuweichen. Das Modernistieren der alten Volkslieder ist vielleicht bis izo noch der einzige Weg dem Volk zu dichten.<sup>16</sup>

(If one wants to attempt to write poetry about his people, he must first study existing songs; start with this, then remodel these songs, ennable them without

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<sup>14</sup> Schelbert, 73 (2002).

<sup>15</sup> Max Peter Baumann, "Die Älplerfeste zu Unspunnen und die Anfänge der Volksmusikforschung in der Schweiz," in *Schweizer Töne: Die Schweiz im Spiegel der Musik*, ed. Annette Landau, 159 (Zurich: Chronos, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 162.



putting aside the meaning of the song in any way. The modernization of the old folk songs is perhaps, up to now, the only way to poetize the people.)<sup>17</sup>

Thus, folk music ceased to be “Lieder vom Volk” (songs of the people) and became “Lieder fürs Volk” (songs for the people).<sup>18</sup> These melodies of specific authorship, intentionally composed and transmitted by means of musical notation, and incorporating folk elements, are referred to as folkloristic music. De Capitani refers to the creation of folkloristic music, as “die Erfindung der Tradition” (the invention of tradition).<sup>19</sup> Understanding the historical circumstances that necessitated this “invention” is key to understanding the Swiss identity.

The evolution of the Swiss identity can be traced largely through four time periods: 1291–1522 (from Confederation to the Reformation, henceforth referred to as Pre-reformation), 1522–1750’s (Swiss Reformation and Post-Reformation), 1750’s–1805 (the time of the Enlightenment in Switzerland), and 1805–present (the time of Swiss unification). The following section will outline the political, social, and musical changes in Switzerland from 1291 to 1805 when, temporarily united under the French invention of the Helvetian Republic, Bern held its first national music festival, permanently changing the nature of Swiss folk music.

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<sup>17</sup> English translations of all German texts cited are by Erika Robertson

<sup>18</sup> Baumann, 156 (2000).

<sup>19</sup> François De Capitani, “Realitäten des Musiklebens und der Musikausübung in der Schweiz des 18 Jahrhunderts am Beispiel Berns,” in *Schweizer Töne: Die Schweiz im Speigel der Musik*, ed. Annette Landau, 152 (Zurich: Chronos, 2000).



## **Political, Social, and Musical Climate in Switzerland**

**1291–1805**

Weilenmann outlines 3 different commonalities around which nations can be organized: common descent, common language, and common territory.<sup>20</sup> The Swiss nation has always chosen to unify itself, however loosely, around the third criterion, that of common territory. Switzerland's nationalistic development is remarkably different from that of the nations that surround it despite the common language and descent they share. The evolution of the country's nationalistic development "shaped not only social and political institutions differently from its ethnically related northern neighbors, but also conditioned a separate mentality."<sup>21</sup> What is this mentality? Von Geyerz suggests the Swiss mentality can be circumscribed to four general concepts. First, mountains are the innermost homeland, noble and true. They represent the strength and constancy of the Swiss spirit. Second, the creation of definitively Swiss texts (songs and legends) is essential in order to remember and celebrate historic struggles. Third, only with the strength of God can the Swiss emerge victorious from all endeavors. Finally, the peasant, as opposed to the noble, is the epitome of genuine nobility.<sup>22</sup> These ideals, of course, did not emerge fully formed at the creation of the old Confederation in 1291, but evolved over time.

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<sup>20</sup> Hermann Weilenmann, *Die vielsprachige Schweiz*, 70 (Basle: Rhein Verlag, 1925).

<sup>21</sup> Schelbert, 75 (2002).

<sup>22</sup> Otto von Geyerz, *Das Volkslied der deutschen Schweiz*, 37–80 (Frauenfeld: Verlag Huber, 1927).



On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1291 the three cantons of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden signed an alliance for mutual aid “against infringements, by secular or ecclesiastical lords, of their hard-won communal self-government and administration of justice,”<sup>23</sup> and what is known as the Old Confederation was born. The terms of this Confederation remained virtually unchanged until the end of the eighteenth century: a loose alliance that formed no executive or legislative body, common army or common laws. Its only purpose was to protect the independence of the individually sovereign cantons. Nothing more united its citizens than the desire to govern themselves, trade freely with each other, work as they willed, and defend their liberties.<sup>24</sup>

Near the middle of the fourteenth century the three city republics of Zurich, Lucerne, and Bern joined the Confederation. Surrounding countries found this equal union of bourgeois city-states to peasant valley cantons unnatural and subversive. The leadership of the Holy Roman Empire “clearly perceived it as a threat to the nobility’s predominance and fought by force as well as ideological means against this exit from the feudal stage.”<sup>25</sup> However, the Empire’s opposition to the alliance did not succeed. The Confederation was the only region in Europe in which the Empire did not manage to suppress this communalist attitude of self-administration and government.<sup>26</sup> By the end of the fourteenth century there was a total of eight cantons in the federation. Over the next two centuries, the Confederation acquired outlying territories of strategic military importance either by conquest or purchase. Geneva entered into an alliance in 1584. Other French and Italian speaking lands were added as subject lands, almost colonies,

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<sup>23</sup> Kohn, 18 (1956).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>25</sup> Schelbert, 74 (2002).

<sup>26</sup> Thomas A. Brady, *Turning Swiss: Cities and Empires*, 28–29 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).



which were subject to the governance of ruling cantons. These ruling cantons, while often oppressive, respected the local and traditional forms of self-government of their subject lands. By the end of the sixteenth century, thirteen cantons formed the membership of the Confederation. This arrangement would remain unchanged for over two hundred years.

Schelbert states: “the widely held beliefs, views, customs, and emotions [in other words the mentality] of a given group may derive either from the anonymous creativity of a collectivity that constantly reshapes them in playful adaptation, or they may result from the interplay between a solitary inventor’s creation and a group that adopts it as a normative expression of its own mind.”<sup>27</sup> The second part of this statement is relevant to the development of Switzerland’s folk music around the time of the Enlightenment and will be discussed in a later section. However, the first part of Schelbert’s statement is relevant to the time period of the Pre-Reformation. During this time in the history of the Swiss Confederation, folk music emerged as a functional element of the work of the peasant. Specific authorship of particular songs or melodies was never established. The anonymous, creative powers of the collective of peasant farmers and herders shaped the course of Swiss folk music; they were the musical voice of Swiss identity in the Confederation’s first three hundred years.

A few examples of this music will help illustrate the cultural identity of the Confederation. The yodel, *kühreihen* (or *ranz des vaches*), and alphorn were daily components of the work of the herder and farmer. The yodel grew out of the necessity of the herder on the mountainside to communicate with their families or other herdsmen. It is a wordless melody, characterized by the rapid alternation of head and chest voice, which is meant to echo off the mountains and “give comfort and fellowship to the

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<sup>27</sup> Schelbert, 75 (2002).



isolated herders.”<sup>28</sup> The *kühreihen* (cow-song), or *ranz des vaches* as it was known in the French-speaking cantons, is a song created to soothe and persuade the cattle to follow the herder to the pasture for milking.<sup>29</sup> The text consisted mainly of an itemization of the animals’ names coupled with either a poem or small narrative. The alphorn is a long wooden horn (between four and twelve feet in length) with an upturned bowl at the bottom that rests on the ground as it is played. With no valves, stops, or slides the pitch is altered by the breath and embouchure of the player. It has a rich sound that carries for miles in the mountains and causes a prolonged echo.<sup>30</sup> The use of the Swiss alphorn came from a desire to ease the transition from day into night. “Only continued sound (by the alphorn) was regarded as capable of bridging this perilous gap.”<sup>31</sup>

These forms of folk music gave rise to other calls, melodies, and dances that formed an important part of Swiss work and social life. Regrettably, only a handful of this music has survived. This is largely due to the effects of the Reformation, which all but eliminated secular song from the Confederation.

The Confederation’s conquest of additional land halted in the early 1500’s. This was mainly due to the lack of a central governing force. Citizens could unite for the purposes of defense, but the mobilization of an army to form an offensive was rendered nearly impossible. This inability to participate in armed conflicts forced the Confederation into a position of neutrality, one that has since become traditional.<sup>32</sup> This neutrality was a great asset in the sixteenth century, during the Reformation, when

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<sup>28</sup> Swiss Yodel and Folklore Group, “What is a Yodel?” Baerg-Roeseli Inc., <http://www.swiss.org.au/home.php?ID=2> (accessed Aug. 17, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Fritz Frauchiger, “The Swiss Kuhreihen,” *The Journal of American Folk-Lore* 54, nos. 213–214 (July–December 1941): 122.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>32</sup> Kohn, 20 (1956).



religious wars devastated Europe. The Confederation's dissociation kept its independence intact and the cantons prosperous. The German author Grimmelshausen describes the economic and social climate in his novel *Simplicissimus the Vagabond* from the perspective of its eponymous hero:

Here in comparison with other German lands the country seemed to me as strange as if I had been in Brazil or China. I saw how the people did trade and traffic in peace, how the stables were full of cattle and the farmyards crowded with fowl, geese, and ducks, the roads were used in safety by travelers, and the inns were full of people making merry. There was no fear of an enemy, no dread of plundering, and no terror of losing goods and life and limb; each man lived under his own vine and fig-tree, and that moreover (in comparison with other German lands) in joy and delight, so that I held this land for an earthly paradise, though by nature it seemed rough as might be.<sup>33</sup>

Though absent from the religious conflict of Europe, the Confederation was not immune to inner discord. Protestants and Catholics sympathized with their respective sides of the conflict, effectively splitting Switzerland into two bitterly antagonistic religious camps.

This division did not sweep across the Confederation in the form of physical conflict and Switzerland remained, however loosely, politically unified. Each group's desire to preserve the status quo was stronger than its desire for the expansion of its faith.

Religious barriers challenged the unity of the Confederation, separating the cantons more effectively than linguistic barriers. Citizens were tied to their own states by religious loyalty and the love of home. The canton itself, not the Confederation, was considered the Fatherland.<sup>34</sup> These religious divisions also erected musical barriers throughout the country.

Just as the Reformation split Switzerland into two religious landscapes, it also divided the country into two musical landscapes. In reformed cantons, the break with

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<sup>33</sup> Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, *Der Abenteuerliche Simplicissimus* (1688) Bk. V, Ch. I, tr. as *Simplicissimus the Vagabond* by A.T.S. Goederk, 304 (London: Routledge, 1924).

<sup>34</sup> Kohn, 21 (1956).



devotional music traditions and practices was total. Huldreich Zwingli, a prominent leader of the Swiss Reformation, seceded from the Roman Catholic Church in 1522. He rejected any singing in the corporate worship of the church. Devotional singing, he argued, was like prayer. Since prayer was to remain a private act, the idea of public prayer was considered hypocritical and therefore abolished. Although he was a firm believer in extra-liturgical song, by 1525 Zwingli had eliminated all singing from the churches in Zurich. This lasted until the end of the century.<sup>35</sup>

In the Catholic cantons, the tradition of sacred music lived on. Secular music and dance, which had been prohibited in reformed states, did not receive such strict injunctions. However, Counter Reformatory authorities did eventually attempt to systematically control popular music in these provinces.<sup>36</sup>

For two hundred years the forces of the Reformation attempted to eliminate Swiss secular music traditions. Because of strictly enforced prohibitions, secular singing, playing, and dancing were considered unsafe activities. In reformed areas, there were few band and choir directors as a result of the confined musical practices. The folk singer, along with beggars and peddlers, had become part of the lowest class of society. This “liedlosen Zeit” (time without song)<sup>37</sup> gave birth to a new musical culture in the Confederation.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Switzerland’s Collegia Musica was established. It spread the singing of psalms throughout the Reformed Church. Four-part polyphonic psalms were soon incorporated into its worship services. The popularity of psalm singing eventually spread to the public who, in light of the ban on secular song,

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<sup>35</sup> Music, 51–55 (1998).

<sup>36</sup> De Capitani, 146 (2000).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 145–146.



eagerly accepted it as a substitute. A statute clarifying the prohibition of folk song was passed in 1680 with regard to the singing of psalms:

desgleichen sollen weder von Meister noch Gesellen, in freyen Zechen und Mähleren bey den Tischen einige üppige Lieder nicht, sondern nur christliche Lieder und Psalmen gesungen werden.<sup>38</sup>

(likewise, should neither master or journeyman, in allowed drinking and loitering at the tables, be singing wanton songs, but only Christian songs and psalms are to be sung.)

Christoph Meiners, a German visitor to the canton of Bern, described a social gathering of farmers:

Nichts machte mich mehre lachen, als die Bauern, wenn sie besoffen sind, daß ihre Zungen nachgerade unbeweglich werden, Psalmen zu singen anfangen. Sie heben, wie man mir sagt, moistens mit dem 42. Psalm an und gehen dann zu dem 25., 27. Und 103. Psalm fort. Sie singen diese Psalmen nicht aus Andacht, sondern weil sie miestens nichts anderes zu singen wissen.<sup>39</sup>

(Nothing makes me laugh more than the farmers when they get drunk. Their tongues become practically motionless and they start to sing psalms. They lift their voices, I am told, mostly with the 42<sup>nd</sup> psalm and then go on to the 25<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 103<sup>rd</sup> psalm. They sing these psalms, not from devotion, but because they know nothing else to sing.)

Small circles of music lovers would gather to sing psalms and eventually perform them on instruments. Were it not for this kind of sociability, Swiss instrumental music would have been in short supply.<sup>40</sup>

As the eighteenth century dawned, the Age of Enlightenment started to affect the citizens of the Confederation. “Intellectual trends, which penetrated Switzerland from the west”<sup>41</sup> began to break down the religious barriers that divided the country. A desire to return to the freedom and unification of the constitutional liberty of Switzerland’s past gave rise to a new spirit of nationalism. However, this was still patriotism for the canton

<sup>38</sup> François De Capitani, “Das Vaterland als Ohrwurm: Über die Erfindung der Schweiz in der Musik,” in *Geschichte als Musik*, ed. Otto Borst, 253 (Tübingen, Ger.: Silberburg, 1999).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>40</sup> De Capitani, 145 (2000).

<sup>41</sup> Kohn, 23 (1956).



and not for the Confederation as a whole. It was a desire for the civic virtues and human rights of older times rather than for national unity.<sup>42</sup> This desire would, once again, change the musical landscape of the Confederation by reawakening an interest in the traditions of the past.

At this time, the Confederation was in a state of disrepair. All political rights were limited to hereditary castes (long-established peasant families, guild-masters, patrician aristocracy). Subject lands and rural communities were without rights; former treaties and liberties were disregarded. The political unrest in France as well as the emotional state of the proletariat spread to Switzerland. It was in this climate, Kohn observes, that the beginning of Swiss nationalism emerged when Johann Heinrich Füssli made the statement: “[Switzerland is] an association of independent yet interdependent states...the members of which are like the members of one body of which none can suffer without all of them suffering.”<sup>43</sup>

These words enlivened “enlightened” youth. Citizens turned to the records of Switzerland’s past struggles for inspiration. They reflected on the origin of the old Confederation in the thirteenth century when free communities of peasants and burghers established and preserved their liberties in the midst of a Europe that was becoming more subjected to feudalism and absolutism. “The revived memory and the glorifying interpretation of those foundations kept the spirit of national cohesion and of human liberty strong amidst all the deep social changes and international tensions of recent times.”<sup>44</sup> The days of the origin of the Confederation were an inspiration and beacon: industrious peasants in a struggle against aristocracy; “a voice resounding in the majesty

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<sup>42</sup> Kohn, 21–24 (1956).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 16–17.



of glorious undefiled nature herself.”<sup>45</sup> William Tell, till now a character of dubious morality, reemerged in the minds of the people as a hero of hearth, home, and the rights of man. “Enlightened” citizens felt the Confederation shared the “re-awakened memories of a unique past in which liberty resounded,”<sup>46</sup> and a love of the beauty of Swiss nature as well as an interest in common security and order.

The social ideals of the Enlightenment were closely connected with the formation of a modern musical life. This philosophical and political phenomenon reached all areas of life “from food and drink to pious devotion” (*vom Essen und Trinken bis zur Frömmigkeit*).<sup>47</sup> As national tradition became of greater importance the ecclesiastical regime began to fall away.<sup>48</sup> However, this shift from the rigid laws and customs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was slow in the reformed areas of the country. While Bern reintroduced the organ into Church services in 1725, Zurich remained committed to “Zwinglian soberness” (*zwinglianischen Nüchternheit*)<sup>49</sup> until the nineteenth century. Enlightened theologians now supported the use of spiritual songs in addition to the older psalms.

Court music was only of marginal importance to the development of Switzerland’s new musical life as its traditions were often rejected by the Confederation. The performance of opera, for example, was not supported. The public concert, conversely, rose to popularity quickly with performances occurring regularly in the first half of the eighteenth century. In Switzerland, foreign musicians found a grateful, unspoiled public. They established themselves there as teachers since the Reformation’s

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<sup>45</sup> Kohn, 24 (1956).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>47</sup> De Capitani, 146 (2000).

<sup>48</sup> De Capitani, 259 (1999).

<sup>49</sup> De Capitani, 147 (2000).



two hundred years of musical repression meant there was not sufficient local ability to provide musical instruction.<sup>50</sup>

Private musical instruction in the home became more common. Such instruction was usually brief as it was expensive and therefore not considered a priority. Students would continue their musical education largely self-taught and were expected to learn multiple instruments. Thus, the musical dilettante became the backbone of Swiss musical culture. “A new sociability united men and women in common conversation, in play, and in music-making.” (*Eine neue Geselligkeit vereinigte Männer und Frauen zum gemeinsamen Gespräch, zum Spiel und Musizieren.*)<sup>51</sup> In the latter half of the century, the concert found lasting popularity and musicians, who had once belonged to a class of servants and beggars, now met with audiences as equals.<sup>52</sup>

Folk music also began to reemerge in the eighteenth century. At this time the prohibitions held over from the Reformation were still active. However, the strict enforcement of these injunctions did not deter citizens from engaging in secular song and dance. The Chapter Courts were filled with penalized musicians and dancers. As the Enlightenment took further root in the Confederation, there was a gradual easing of bans on folk songs and dancing. Authorities deemed it reasonable to loosen the laws as so much of the population persisted in non-compliance. This action was also necessary as a central tenet of an “enlightened” authority was to be moderate and preach of a God that is good with children who are disposed to behave well.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> De Capitani, 148–150 (2000).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 147–149.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 148.



Thus began, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the determined reconstruction of Swiss national culture with regard to folk music. Among educated and enlightened citizens there emerged two schools of thought. The first wanted to develop a new musical tradition that would help create a national identity to connect all Swiss in accordance with the feelings of the Enlightenment. The second, comprised largely of German and French scholars, wanted to search for characteristics in existing folk music that represented a free people tied to nature. They wanted to find a music that corresponded to that certain quality of the Alps: undisturbed, ideal, impregnable, and unspoiled.<sup>54</sup>

The search for existing folk music met with little success. Johann Jakob Bodmer discovered *kühreihen* in only certain isolated regions that by no means lived up to these poetic expectations. These songs were “like the herdsman’s life, peaceful and monotonous” (wie das Hirtenleben, sanft und eintönig).<sup>55</sup> Karl August Kuttner, an ethnological researcher who toured Switzerland in 1779, transcribed many folk songs, the majority of which he found tasteless or coarse. The idea of a people without songs did not agree with the philosophy of the Enlightenment and certainly not with the emerging national image of a long-established Confederation with a proud past.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, the reconstruction of Swiss folk music began. A union of city councils, parish priests, and wealthy citizens from around the Confederation met in 1765 to contribute new songs for the enrichment of the people. Four-part psalms, which for nearly two hundred years had been the music of the confederate citizen, provided a foundation of music education to a relatively musically uneducated people. Old psalm

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<sup>54</sup> De Capitani, 251 (1999).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 255.



melodies formed the basis for the first newly composed folk songs. Psalms gradually disappeared in favor of folk songs. “Countless poems and songs found their way to a wide population which immediately sang with enthusiasm.” (Unzählige Dichtungen und Kompositionen fanden den Weg zu einer breiten Bevölkerung, die sie sofort mit Begeisterung sang.)<sup>57</sup> Johann Kaspar Lavater wrote *Schweizerlieder* (Swiss Songs) in 1766, a compilation of newly-composed folk songs that found a large audience. Folk song researchers a generation later discovered that writing songs in local dialects encouraged more rapid popularization. The introduction of this new music caused a musical reorientation of the Confederation in the 1780’s.<sup>58</sup>

The political climate of the Confederation in the eighteenth century influenced the formation of the Helvetic Society in Schinznach in 1761, an organization whose goal was to “reawaken among the Swiss the awareness of their belonging together, thus helping them to regain an honored position for their country.”<sup>59</sup> This society’s methods were purely literary and achieved no actual reform. However, it did educate and inspire many future political leaders. When outside forces would later threaten the Confederation, a longing for unification was awoken within them.<sup>60</sup>

The country’s leadership, regrettably, undermined the nobility of the enlightened thinkers in the Confederation. The city-states continued to oppress subject lands, rendering Switzerland politically unstable. In 1794 leaders in the rural community of Stäfa submitted a memorandum to their political leaders in Zurich. The letter called for an extension of their existing constitutional rights throughout the land and not only inside

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<sup>57</sup> De Capitani, 255 (1999).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 255–256.

<sup>59</sup> Kohn, 27 (1956).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 27.



the walls of the city. Stäfa was severely punished for this act and its ancient liberties and charters were annulled. In this climate of political unrest Switzerland collapsed before the French Invasion in 1798. On the grounds of “liberating” the Swiss people, whose current system of self-government was considered feudal, the French imposed a central form of government in the form of the Helvetian Republic. It replaced the old Confederation on April 12, of that year. The Republic created a national legislative assembly which politically unified Switzerland for the first time in its 500-year history.<sup>61</sup> “Even this disaster could not overcome the insistence of the cantons on their traditional prerogatives and on their full sovereignty.”<sup>62</sup> This tenacity manifested itself in a demonstration of the unity of the Swiss confederate spirit: the Swiss Herdsman’s Festival at Unspunnen in 1805.<sup>63</sup>

### **Political, Social, and Musical Climate in Switzerland**

#### **1800–Present**

“The construction of the Swiss nation was inseparably connected with the construction of a self-created tradition.” (Die Konstruktion einer schweizerischen Nation war untrennbar mit der Konstruktion einer autochtonen Tradition verbunden.)<sup>64</sup> This tradition was quintessentially represented by the Swiss Herdsman’s Festival in Unspunnen in 1805. It was born of complex political circumstances that had taken hold of Switzerland since the Napoleonic invasion in 1798. From 1798–1830, Switzerland

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<sup>61</sup> Kohn, 31–33 (1956).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>63</sup> De Capitani, 257 (1999).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 259.



passed through three distinct political periods: Helvetican (1798–1803), Mediation (1803–1814), and Restoration (1815–1830).<sup>65</sup> It is necessary to discuss each of these periods in order to understand the evolving Swiss identity that was manifest at Unspunnen and at other festivals that followed.

Following the French invasion, the Helvetican Republic was formed on April 12, 1798. The Republic forced democracy on the Confederation and established a central governing body. The policies of the Republic were formed more from the French revolutionary view than the rural customs of Switzerland. For this reason they conflicted too strongly with the Swiss ideals of self-government and respect for individual differences to win general approval. Subject lands welcomed the equality brought to them by the republic. They “wished, finally, like their brothers in all other cantons of Switzerland, to be relieved of their subservience and...demanded back the political rights they believed they were good enough to merit” (wünscht endlich, wie seine Brüder in allen übrigen Kantonen der Schweiz, der Unterthanenschaft enthoben zu sein und...die politischen Rechte, die es eben so gut zu verdienen glaubt, mit allem Ernste zurück zu fordern).<sup>66</sup> The ruling cantons rioted in response to the attenuation of their authority. As a result, French troops were stationed in Switzerland to preserve the peace. For many citizens, the Republic was an undesirable political change. However, nineteenth-century historians viewed the Republic as an essential step towards the birth of the Swiss nation. Carl Hilty, a professor of Law in Bern in 1874, stated: “Our fatherland is an outstanding

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<sup>65</sup> Baumann, 170 (2000).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 169.



example of how a strong political idea can transform...very different peoples into an important nation.”<sup>67</sup>

Under the Helvetian Republic, the idea of a public demonstration of patriotic unity and freedom, namely the Herdsman’s Festival, was conceived but never realized. “Switzerland had become a scene of battle in Europe and, in addition, was also torn on the inside such that she was unable to act.” (Die Schweiz war zu einem Kriegsschauplatz Europas geworden und darüber hinaus auch im Inneren derart zerrissen, daß sie kaum handlungsfähig war.)<sup>68</sup>

The withdrawal of French troops in 1802 resulted in riots throughout the Republic. These riots led to the collapse of the Helvetian Republic, necessitating Napoleon’s “Act of Mediation” in 1803. The Act was a compromise between the individual cantonal government of the old Confederation, and the inter-cantonal equality of the Helvetian Republic. Under the Act, the Republic ceased to exist; Switzerland was no longer a nation, but rather an alliance of sovereign cantons. The notion of subject lands and ruling cantons was abolished. Napoleon confirmed this to the Swiss on December 10, 1802, when he said, “there exist neither subject lands nor any privileges of locality, birth, persons and families.”<sup>69</sup> Thus, the number of sovereign cantons grew from eight to nineteen.<sup>70</sup> With self-government somewhat restored, Switzerland was once again a Confederation. A spirit of newfound unity spread through the population. This

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<sup>67</sup> Kohn, 39 (1956).

<sup>68</sup> De Capetani, 257 (1999).

<sup>69</sup> Kohn, 48 (1956).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 48–53.



unity found realization in the Herdsman's Festival of 1805. It recaptured the old herdsmen's traditions, and sealed anew the union between people and government.<sup>71</sup>

One of the main goals of the Alpine Herdsman's Festival was to revitalize the traditions of the people. In the infancy of the Confederation, athletic herdsmen's festivals regularly took place, which consisted of competitions in long-jump, running, stone throwing, shooting, and wrestling. These traditions had disappeared as a result of the Reformation. As Switzerland began to attract the attention of the international community, a need to vitalize tourism arose. The Herdsman's festival was designed as the solution to both these problems; it both renewed the old Swiss festival tradition and bolstered Switzerland's tourist industry. The Herdsman's Festival directed international attention away from the political instability in Switzerland in recent years, toward the quaint customs and traditions of the Alps.<sup>72</sup>

There were more subtle purposes to the Herdsman's Festival. It was hoped that citizens of the *Berner Oberland* (former subject lands of Bern now separated by cantonal divisions through the Act of Mediation) would feel reconciled to old authorities by an awakening of patriotic sentiment. Simple Swiss customs and virtues would be preserved by reintroducing old folk and musical traditions, and by creating new ones. The pride generated from safeguarding these traditions would promote nationalist feelings.<sup>73</sup> Organizers from the city of Bern hoped demonstrate a powerful archetype of unspoiled Swiss culture to the guests who arrived from all regions of Switzerland and Europe.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> De Capetani, 257 (1999).

<sup>72</sup> Baumann, 163 (2000).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>74</sup> De Capetani, 257 (1999).



Music scholars and enthusiasts from around Switzerland collected folksongs and *kühreihen* in preparation for the festival. These songs came together in the *Sammlung von Schweizer Kühreihen und Volkslieder* (Collection of Swiss *Kühreihen* and Folksong). The *Sammlung* was published specifically for the festival in 1805, and combined folksong texts with musical notation for the first time. This preservation and perpetuation of Swiss folksongs underpinned the festival's goals of cultural preservation.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, the Alpine Herdsman's Festival came to fruition on August 17, 1805. It was dedicated to Berchtold V, the founder of Bern, and organized by four citizens of the city: Niklaus Fredrich von Mülinen (the Mayor of Bern), Friedrich Ludwig Thormann (a head official from Interlaken), Fran Sigmund von Wagner (an art enthusiast), and Franz Niklaus König (a painter and lithographer). There were more than 3000 visitors in attendance, including princes, counts, barons, Bern patriots, "und mehr als hundert andere fremde Herren und Damen von Distinktion" (and more than a hundred other foreign gentlemen and ladies of distinction)<sup>76</sup> from across Europe. Leaders took satisfaction in the monetary achievements of the festival. Over a thousand 'Louis d'or' (French gold coins) were generated for the villages of Thun, Lauterbrunnen, Grindelwald, and Meringen.

The Alpine Herdsman's Festival, like the festivals of ancient times, included contests in wrestling, stone throwing, and shooting. In addition to these, entertainment was offered in the form of singing and dancing, as well as a contest in alphorn playing.<sup>77</sup> The best marksman received new clothes; the best stone thrower received a cow herder's

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<sup>75</sup> Baumann, 165–167 (2000).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>77</sup> De Capitani, 257 (1999).



belt, a cap, and a bag made from English leather. The best choirs received silver medals, money and songbooks, and the winner of the alphorn competition was awarded a ram.<sup>78</sup>

Notwithstanding the involvement of herdsmen from across Switzerland, Baumann views the first Unspunnen festival as “ein Volksfest ohne Volk” (a folk festival without folk).<sup>79</sup> The increased interest in the collection of folksong in the latter half of the eighteenth century elevated the Alpine herdsmen, who were now respected and welcome among the upper class, to a paragon of Swiss identity. Peasant classes were largely uninvolved, and security preparations had been made to prevent beggars from attending the festival. Though the Herdsmen’s Festival was to be an annual event, the second festival did not take place until 1808. Besides the political instability in Switzerland, and the dramatically escalating costs of the event, it was difficult to muster the police force it would have taken to monitor another festival and separate the upper class from the peasants.<sup>80</sup>

The Unspunnen festival exposed problems with regard to Swiss folk music. The *Sammlung von Schweizer Kühreihen und Volkslieder* was revolutionary, but contained only eight folksongs. This small number of songs underlined what was already observed in the latter half of the eighteenth century: national songs were disappearing. The use of the alphorn was also in decline; only two players enrolled in the alphorn competition at the Herdsmen’s Festival.<sup>81</sup> The loss of both folksongs and folk instruments was attributed to the prohibitions of the Reformation, and was met with great concern. In 1808, Franz Niklaus König published his *Vorschläge zur Aufmunterung des Alphorns and zur*

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<sup>78</sup> Baumann, 166 (2000).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>81</sup> De Capitani, 257 (1999).



*Wiederbelebung des Gesanges auf dem Lande* (Proposals for the Encouragement of the Alphorn and to the Revitalization of the Songs on the Land). In his proposals, König called for the distribution of free alphorns, and the implementation of courses under the direction of Bernese musician Ferdinand Furchtegott Huber. Huber inspired the Mayor of Bern to order and distribute half a dozen new alphorns.<sup>82</sup>

Despite political, social, and musical concerns, a second Herdsmen's Festival did take place in Unspunnen in 1808. This festival symbolized the Swiss desire for national unity and liberty on a new level. It was held on what was believed at the time to be the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Rütlischwur* (the founding of the old Confederation). The objective of this festival was “verschiedenen Volksklassen aller Cantone” (to unify different classes of people in all cantons)<sup>83</sup> by rekindling a love of old games, customs and traditions. Farmers dressed in costumes reminiscent of the founding days of the old Confederation. A dozen alphorn players emerged to compete in the alphorn competition. Tourist activity in Switzerland was greatly increased by a broadening of the tourist base. Over 5000 people of varied social standing gathered from across Switzerland and Europe. In this “reinen, geläuterten, schweizerischen Gemeinsinns” (clear-ringing Swiss public spirit)<sup>84</sup> were heard old *kühreihen*, yodels, and folksongs. The yodel became more popular during this festival, and Swiss composers began to experiment with it in their compositions. The Alpine Herdsmen's Festival of 1808 broadened the awareness, in all levels of society, of the rituals of the Swiss homeland.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Baumann, 167–168 (2000).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 169.



However, the celebratory nature of the festivals could not mask the political turmoil in Switzerland at this time. By 1808, Napoleon had begun to violate the rights granted under the Act of Mediation, and Switzerland was on the verge of civil war. The patrician aristocracy had regained power, and wished for a return to the structure of the old Confederation. Rural citizens wanted to preserve their rights established under the Act of Mediation. The disparity between the ruling cantons and the former subject lands caused numerous conflicts, and led to the arrest of many citizens. The brotherhood of Switzerland had become conflicted. Since the festival in 1808 symbolized the unity and fraternity experienced under the old Confederation, it became impossible to continue the festival in coming years. The national festival at Unspunnen was not held again until 1905.<sup>86</sup>

The political disorder in Switzerland and Napoleon's declining popularity led to the collapse of the Act of Mediation in 1813. In 1815 the Congress of Vienna intervened. It added Valais, Neuchatel, and Geneva to the Confederation's existing cantons. The Congress also compelled the cantons to sign a federal pact. The pact preserved the sovereignty of the individual cantons enforced by the Act of Mediation. The Congress also admonished Switzerland to "unite in order to maintain their security, to preserve their liberty and independence against any attack from without, and to keep order and tranquility within."<sup>87</sup> For these reasons, in 1815, the Confederation officially declared neutrality in all European conflicts. Despite the reforms imposed by the Congress of Vienna, civil unrest persisted. Disagreements over the authority of the aristocracy were a continual source of conflict among the cantons. In 1831, the patrician regime in Bern was

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<sup>86</sup> Baumann, 170 (2000).

<sup>87</sup> Kohn, 54–60 (1956).



dissolved by a majority vote of the population. A judge of the Constitutional Court was appointed to work out the principles of sovereignty of the people.<sup>88</sup> Political tension persisted, and came to a height in the civil war of 1847. Although the war was minor (lasting less than a month with less than one hundred casualties), it had a lasting impact in the minds of the Swiss. In 1848 the Swiss drafted their federal constitution. Switzerland, without outside coercion, united as a country for the first time.<sup>89</sup>

Following unification, many small Alpine and wrestling festivals were held across Switzerland in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Though none of these smaller festivals achieved the status of the original Alpine Herdsmen's Festival, a festival held in Sempach in 1886 established important innovations in the preservation and celebration of Swiss tradition. At this festival, elaborate history pageants featuring traditional costumes and hundreds of actors were presented to the public. Choirs also played important roles in these productions; choral singing cued the entrances of key historical characters who in turn performed duets or arias. The concept of the history pageant evolved into grand spectacle in the festivals at Lucerne. The pageant at Lucerne's Weinfelden festival in 1898 was colossal, enlisting as many as 1500 actors and 800 singers. At the end of the program, the crowd joined with the actors in singing the national anthem. In this way, the thousands in attendance could physically experience the music and a national feeling of unity.<sup>90</sup> "Festivals allowed the hearts to beat faster, and freed national emotions and the patriotic spirit." (Festspiele liessen die Herzen Höher schlagen, lösten nationale Ergriffenheit und patriotische Begeisterung aus.)<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Baumann, 170 (2000).

<sup>89</sup> Kohn, 54–60 (1956).

<sup>90</sup> Marchal, 266–267 (2000).

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 266.



Festivals played a vital role in the formation of a folkloristic identity in Switzerland. The festival at Unspunnen marked the beginning of “die Erfindung der Tradition” (the invention of tradition),<sup>92</sup> and established the importance of folksong in the Swiss culture. It led to a wave of folk customs and activity – an “Aufrüstung des Schweizer Alpenvolkes mit Alphörnlen und Kuhreihensammlungen” (armament of the Swiss Alpine people with alphorns, and to *kühreihen* gatherings).<sup>93</sup> The third Unspunnen festival in 1905 “was like a flight out of the problematic feelings of the day, out of the fear of the modern, into a utopia out of the past” (wie eine Flucht aus der als problematisch empfundenen Gegenwart, aus jener Furcht vor der Moderne, in eine rückwärtsgewandte Utopie).<sup>94</sup>

The start of the second industrial revolution (1870) resulted in the adoption of a new federal constitution in 1874. Hersh claims that, as a result, two different national self-images had developed by the beginning of the nineteenth century: an internal image (how Swiss citizens viewed themselves), and an international image (how the international community viewed Switzerland). Security, strength, industriousness, rural virtues, and the simple life of the Alpine herdsman characterized the internal image. Picturesque mountains, costumed peasants, quaint villages, and a standard of exceptional organization characterized the international image. Switzerland sought to reconcile these different identities into a more cohesive, national self-image. This search took place publicly at the World’s Fairs of 1889 (Paris), 1893 (Chicago), and 1900 (Paris). Organizers of the Swiss pavilion argued over the national image conveyed by every painting, sculpture, and architectural design. The decision to include or exclude certain

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<sup>92</sup> De Capitani, 152 (2000).

<sup>93</sup> Marchal, 271 (2000).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 271.



artwork or architecture was motivated solely by a desire for the popularity of the Swiss pavilion. As a result, the more accessible, touristic, international image of Switzerland prevailed.<sup>95</sup>

The international identity was challenged by the rebirth of the national Alpine Herdsmen's Festival in Unspunnen in 1905. Switzerland's popularity at the World's Fair resulted in a huge increase in tourist activity. Twenty-two thousand people from across Switzerland and around the world congregated under the banner of tourism, patriotism, and tradition. At this festival the *Schweizerische Vereinigung für Heimatschutz* (Swiss Organization for the Protection of Homeland) was founded with the goal of solidifying indigenous traditions, costumes, and the singing of folksongs in dialect.

The political and social climate worsened with the approach of First World War, and cultivation of folkloristic music came to a halt. Swiss emigration increased and farming communities diminished. However, *Kühreihen* and other folksongs, that had been so assiduously cultivated since 1805, resisted the change and innovation of the current day. These songs represented the stability of the past, and sounded a wordless protest against turbulent times.<sup>96</sup>

The Swiss concept of *Geistige Landesverteidigung* (intellectual national defense) emerged in the 1930's as a result of international tensions during the interwar period. *Geistige Landesverteidigung* signified the protection of the Swiss identity: dignity, humanity, freedom, connection with nature, creative strength, and a heroic past. Swiss historian Theo Mäusli indicates, "the Swiss...collectively chose to embrace a Swiss nationalism founded essentially on a – "invented" – common Swiss history and "Swiss

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<sup>95</sup> Hirsh, 252–272 (2003).

<sup>96</sup> Baumann, 177 (2000).



spirit” rather than a common Swiss culture.”<sup>97</sup> Thus, the Swiss motto *Einheit in der Vielfalt* (unity in diversity) was adopted. The preservation of Swiss music was a main component of *Geistige Landesverteidigung*. Mäusli eloquently states that music is “one of the finest and most sensitive barometers that the human spirit possesses for recording feelings, sentiments...and mentalities.”<sup>98</sup> While contemporary music can introduce foreign elements, folk music, by its indigenous nature, is a distinctive expression of the nature of a people.<sup>99</sup>

Following World War II, Switzerland turned again to the Alpine Herdsman’s Festival as a symbol of intellectual national defense. The festival represented freedom, equality, unity, and the love of the *Vaterland*. The Swiss felt that it offered protection against the foreign invasion of technology, and the loss of individuality that came with globalization. In the fourth national festival at Unspunnen in 1955, allegiance to the past was demonstrated in theatrical form. A pageant was presented depicting the original festival in 1805, and its four founding fathers (Mülinen, Thormann, Wagner, and König). The event was an opulent merging of past and future. Actors representing famed historical characters (sponsors, foreign guests, marksmen, alphorn players, singers, wrestlers, and stone throwers) from past festivals processed on stage. Festival participants from the present day then entered to a fanfare. The entire company danced across the stage in ceremonial dress and sang in their respective languages. These grand spectacles evoked the grandeur of Switzerland’s past and, thus, emphasized the need to preserve the integrity of Swiss traditions.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Mäusli, 258 (2003).

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 258–260.

<sup>100</sup> Baumann, 177–178 (2000).



The National Swiss Alpine Herdsman's Festival in Unspunnen continues in Switzerland today. As of 2006 it has been held nine times: 1805, 1808, 1905, 1946, 1955, 1968, 1981, 1993, and 2006. Unspunnen has represented many things since its inception. It has symbolized the regressive spirit of the old Confederation, and, conversely, the desire for equality and democracy in Switzerland. It was the cultural manifestation of the political desire for conflict resolution. The festival represented Switzerland's cultural diversity, its legends, livelihood, and countryside. It was a tool of *Geistige Landesverteidigung*: the means of protecting Swiss heritage through musical innovation and the restoration of tradition. As a national symbol and a tool for cultural preservation, the festival helped construct the Swiss identity. The Herdsman's Festival remains vital in the twenty-first century because, throughout Switzerland's history, it nurtured the Swiss identity by revitalizing the past.<sup>101</sup>

### **The Evolution of Swiss Folksong**

Marchal describes Switzerland's obsession with the search for a national identity as typical for a country of its particular structure; Switzerland is small, yet boasts a variety of cultures, landscapes, and languages. Its geographic and demographic diversity necessitated the search for a national identity that would foster patriotism and unity in the hearts of the people. Ernest Bovet, a professor at the University of Zurich in 1912, stated that a "mysterious force" united the Swiss people. This force, he indicated, was a love of the mountains, an industrious spirit, and "un hymne harmonieux au même idéale" (a

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<sup>101</sup> Baumann, 179–181 (2000).



“harmonious anthem of the same ideals).<sup>102</sup> Bovet’s “anthem” is a metaphor for the folksongs of the Swiss people. As an embodiment of a definitively Swiss way of life, Swiss folksongs are an ideal representation of Swiss identity. The cultivation of folksong, and its integration into Switzerland’s growing festival culture, played a crucial role in the development of Swiss national identity in the nineteenth century. In the tense political climate between the beginning of the French Revolution (1789) and the foundation of the Swiss federal state (1848), the musical reconstruction of Switzerland began and helped to disseminate a new national consciousness. Religious, intellectual, and political revolutions spurred sociopolitical reforms, which, in turn, led to the evolution of Swiss folksong. This section of the paper will include a discussion of the development of Swiss folksong and its evolution from the songs of the old Confederation to the voice of Swiss nationalism.

The folksongs of the old Confederation were the utilitarian songs of the Alpine Herdsmen. Some songs related to agricultural cycles (autumn, harvest, and spring), while others emerged as a function of a particular job (weaving, spinning, and coopering).<sup>103</sup> Perhaps the finest example of these functionally-conceived songs was the *kühreihen*, or *ranz des vaches*. The *kühreihen* was “la musique naturelle” (natural music),<sup>104</sup> which arose from the industry of the mountains. It was the authentic “Ausdruck des Älplerlebens und als idyllische Erinnerung an ein naturverbundenes Dasein” (expression of alpine life, and the idyllic remembrance of an existence bound with nature).<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Marchal, 268 (2000).

<sup>103</sup> Baumann, 182 (2000).

<sup>104</sup> Marchal, 270 (2000).

<sup>105</sup> Baumann, 182 (2000).



Herdsmen used these melodies to summon the cows (*kuh*) into rows (*reihen*) to facilitate the journey to the pasture for milking. One variation on the *kühreihen* was the *chûbya*.

The *chûbya* is a whistled call as opposed to a voiced melody (see example 1). In this example, acciaccaturas create only two different intervals: a descending perfect fourth, and an ascending major second. These rapid intervals create the illusion of a call from nature since they imitate the call of a bird.

Example 1: *Chûbya* (Whistle Call) for “*abreuver le troupeau bovin*” (leading the herd to water), opening.<sup>106</sup>



The *chûbya* in example 2 also imitates the call of a bird. Instead of the alternating acciaccaturas and prolonged notes of example 1, every note in the call is executed with equal rapidity. This *chûbya* uses only ascending and descending minor thirds, and ends with the statement of four rapid repetitions of the same note. Here the use of minor thirds is evocative of the call of the cuckoo, a bird that became a symbol for Swiss Alpine life in later centuries.

Example 2: “*Air sifflé pour abreuver les chevaux*” (Whistled song for leading the goats to water), measures 1–8.<sup>107</sup>



<sup>106</sup> Bolle-Zemp, 29 (1992).

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 30 (1992).



Example 3 illustrates a vocalized *kühreihen* in which the word *lyôba* appears multiple times. Although *lyôba* is a commonly-used term in *kühreihen*, its interpretation is disputed among folksong researchers. Some believe *lyôba* to mean “cow” in an old dialect. Others believe it to be an onomatopoeic representation of the alphorn at dawn. Assuming the accuracy of this second, more poetic interpretation, *lyôba* still refers to the herdsman’s cows since they were the objects of the morning alphorn call.<sup>108</sup> Extrapolating on these interpretations, *lyôba por aryâ* means “gather, cows, for the milking.” In example 3 the minor third is still the predominant interval. It ends with a chromatic ascent of three semitones and a descending slide to an indeterminate note. Here, regardless of the intervallic similarities between examples 2 and 3, the vocalized nature of the *kühreihen*, as opposed to a bird-like whistle, evokes the distinctive call of the alphorn.

Example 3: “*lyôba por aryâ*”, “*Appel aux vaches à l’heure de la traite*” (Call to the cows at milking time), measures 1–2.<sup>109</sup>



In later folksong collections, *kühreihen* were also called *melkerlied* (milkers’ songs) or *chuedräckeler* (roughly translated as “filthy cows”, denoting the unclean nature

<sup>108</sup> Frauchiger, 125 (1941).

<sup>109</sup> Bolle-Zemp, 37 (1992).



of the herdsman' work).<sup>110</sup> Nineteenth-century collections included harmonizations of *kühreihen* and added multiple verses that lauded the work of the Alpine herdsman.

Joseph Bovet's “*Le-j’armalyi di Colonbète*” is a folkloristic song that embodies the spirit of a typical *kühreihen*. It is a six-verse song with two alternating refrains. These two refrains contain the traditional elements of old *kühreihen*: the *liôba* call, and the call of specific cows. The *liôba* call is found in the first refrain, while the second refrain mentions cows specifically by their appearance: “*Blyantzè, nérè, Rodzè, mothêlè, Dzouvenè, ôtre*” (whites, blacks, reds, spotted, young, others). Once of primary importance, these calls are now secondary to the six added verses that paint a picture of the life of the Alpine Herdsman. Example 4 illustrates the *liôba* phrase, which follows each verse and precedes each refrain. Over the course of the song, this is the only phrase that is repeated all six times. This phrase is an excellent example of how Swiss composers incorporated elements from traditional folksongs into their new compositions. The *kühreihen*'s characteristic melodic intervals have been incorporated and modified in the interest of harmonic progression. The descending minor third occurs (harmonized) in measures 11 and 15. In measures 12 and 16 a similar descending minor third is prefaced by a descending major second. The distinctive sound and the definitively Swiss origins of *kühreihen* made them a popular choice of folkloristic music composers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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<sup>110</sup> Baumann, 182 (2000).



Example 4: J. Bovet's "Le-j'armalyi di Colonbètè" (The herdsman of Colombette), measures 11–18.<sup>111</sup>

Liô-ba, liô - ba,  
por a - riå, Liô - ba, liô - ba por a - riå.

Refrain 1. Fine.

sans répét.

During the Age of Enlightenment, the intellectual environment in Switzerland inspired the systematic collection and investigation of Swiss folksong. Johann Gottfried Herder, a German philosopher, was influential in the investigation of folksong and developed many theories concerning it. He believed that folksong offered perspective on the nature of human existence as well as ethnic and social perspectives on a particular culture. Herder defined folksongs as "Lieder des Volks" (songs of the people)<sup>112</sup> passed down by oral tradition. This definition encompassed a diffuse repertoire of songs: *Kühreihen* (cow melodies), *Küherlied* (herdman's songs), *Kiltlied* (kilt songs), *Fasnachtslied* (Shrovetide songs), *Ausrufslied* (calling songs), *Neujahrslied* (New Year songs), *Nachtwächterlied* (Watchman's songs), *Dreikönigslied* (Epiphany songs), *Landmannslied* (songs of countrymen), *Trinklied* (Drinking songs), *Bänkelsand* (Street ballads), *Appenzeller Lied* (songs from Appenzell), *Kinderlied* (Children's songs), and *Flugblattlied* (Handbill songs), to mention a few. However, Herder's collections of folksongs narrowed the understanding of national folklore. He published only folksong texts without their corresponding melodies, and rejected the use of dialect. To Herder,

<sup>111</sup> Bolle-Zemp, 174 (1992).

<sup>112</sup> Baumann, 159 (2000).



preserving folksongs in the original dialect was unimportant. His collections combined folk elements with High German poetry, which resulted in collections of song texts similar in style to the collection of German poems, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Though the absence of melody and the rejection of Swiss dialect in Herder's collections prevented any Swiss cultural self-analysis, his research was essential to the collection of Swiss folksong in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>113</sup>

Gottlieb Sigmund Studer, and Gottlieb Jakob Kuhn were two important figures in the evolution of Swiss folksong. Together they compiled and edited many collections of Swiss folksong. In 1778 Gottlieb Sigmund Studer gathered *kühreihen* and herdmen's songs from Berner Oberland, Appenzell, Uri, Schwyz, and Unerwalden. His work made possible the collection of *kühreihen* that appeared in printed form at the Herdsman's festival in 1805.<sup>114</sup>

Gottlieb Jakob Kuhn, a poet and parish priest, published a collection of folksongs in Swiss dialects in 1802 with the intent to "improve and beautify the collected material and bring it back into circulation" (zu verbessern und zu verschönern und es wieder in Umlauf zu bringen).<sup>115</sup> By distributing folksongs into the hands of Swiss citizens, Kuhn hoped to popularize Swiss folksong. He transcribed folksongs and used them as patterns for new songs. Kuhn used *Berndeutsch* (the German dialect in the canton of Bern) as the poetic language for his songs because he found the tone of the language to be both "eigen und national zugleich" (singular and national at the same time).<sup>116</sup> Publishing songs in a Swiss dialect allowed the farmers and peasants to sing them easily, and adopt the songs

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<sup>113</sup> Baumann, 159–162 (2000).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 159–164.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 172.



into their own traditions. Thus, Kuhn changed the nature of Swiss folksongs from “Lieder des Volks” (songs of the people) to “Lieder fürs Volk” (songs for the people).<sup>117</sup> His songs appealed to the fraternal bonds of the Swiss by elevating the melodies of the cowhands and alpine herdsmen to an art form, and by revitalizing the Swiss aspirations of liberty that were so fundamental to the old Confederation. Kuhn’s use of Swiss dialect was accepted in educated circles after 1798, and caused a downturn in the use of High German in Swiss folksong. As a result, Swiss dialect poems emerged with growing frequency in weekly journals, folk calendars, and almanacs.<sup>118</sup> Amid the rise in popularity of Swiss folksong, and the outbreak of folksong collecting activities at the end of the eighteenth century, the first Herdsman’s Festival was held.

One of the purposes of the festival was to build unity among the people by revitalizing the ancient traditions of the old confederation. Under the influence of the philosopher, politician, economist, and tourist, the original, functional purposes of the herdsman’s music had been disregarded. *Kühreihen*, once used to call cows and calm livestock, was now used strictly for entertaining the masses. Alphorn melodies and dances were performed on command and followed by applause. Publication of a *Sammlung aller Lieder, Gedichte und anderen Schriften auf das schweizerische Alphirten Fest zu Unspunnen im Kanton Bern* (Collection of all Songs, Poems, and other Writings on the Swiss Alpine Herdsman’s Festival in Unspunnen in the Canton of Bern) underpinned the Festival’s goals of cultural preservation by creating a concrete record of folksongs and customs.<sup>119</sup> The Unspunnen festival motivated the publication of other Swiss folksong collections. The *Sammlung von Schweizer Kühreihen und Volkslieder*,

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<sup>117</sup> Baumann, 159 (2000).

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 167.



containing eight folksongs, was published in 1805. In this collection folksongs appeared with both music and text for the first time.<sup>120</sup>

Franz Niklaus König's *Vorschläge zur Aufmunterung des Alphorns und zur Wiederbelebung des Gesanges auf dem Lande* (1808) continued to revitalize Swiss folksong. In the Proposals, König stated that the artistic demands of contemporary music on the rural population were too high; people needed to be taught simpler songs. The Proposals articulated that the revitalization of old folk traditions could not occur without the revival of singing in the schools and in the military. "Through this combination of ideological and political aims, singing became...a compulsory exercise in patriotism." (Durch diese Verquickung mit ideologischen und politischen Zielen wurde das Singen...zur patriotischen Pflichtübung.)<sup>121</sup> König's Proposals also motivated the creation of new folkloristic songs. Gottlieb Jakob Kuhn's and Ferdinand Fürchtegott Huber's work – editing, adapting and arranging folksongs in the eighteenth century – made it possible to imitate the Swiss folksong style and compose new herdsman's and yodeler's songs in the nineteenth century. Kuhn and Huber became the first creators of folkloristic music. Their compositions became folksongs for a new generation.<sup>122</sup>

The collection and reinvention of Swiss folksong gathered momentum in the first half of the nineteenth century. Following the publication of the *Sammlung* in 1805, three subsequent editions were published in 1812, 1818 and 1826. The second edition contained twenty-seven folksongs, adding nineteen songs to the original eight. These

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<sup>120</sup> Swiss Office for the Development of Trade, *Focus on Switzerland*. Vol. 3, *Intellectual and Literary Life, the Fine Arts, Music*, 153 (Lausanne: Swiss Office for the Development of Trade, 1975).

<sup>121</sup> Baumann, 168 (2000).

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 168–174.



additional songs comprised Kuhn's and Huber's *Kunstlieder im Volkston* (artistic songs in the tone of the people).<sup>123</sup>

The third edition of the *Sammlung* included fifty folksongs (twenty-one *kühreihen*, and twenty-nine folk and folkloristic songs) as well as four Swiss dance tunes. The title changed, referencing the inclusion of newly composed folkloristic music: *Sammlung von Schweizer Kühreihen und Volksliedern, theils nach ihrem beganneten, theils nach neuen Melodien in Notenschrift gebracht und mit Clavier-Begleitung versehen* (a Collection of Swiss Cow Melodies and Folksongs, partly those well-known, partly new Melodies, in Notation and with Piano Accompaniment). The most notable changes to this edition included the addition of piano accompaniment for the folksongs, and *Vier Schweizertänze* (four Swiss dances). Baumann states that this edition assembled those folksongs that “mehr oder weniger nach Wort und Melodien schon volkthümlich waren” (more or less, through word and melody, were already popular).<sup>124</sup> The purpose of this new volume was to replace inferior songs and distribute new ones to wider circles of the population. Included in the new folkloristic compositions were Kuhn's *Der Hochzyt-Tanz* (The Wedding Dance), *Küher-Leben* (Cowhand's life), *Kühreihen zum Aufzug auf die Alp im Frühling* (Cow Melodies for the Procession up to the Alps in Spring), and *zur Alpfahrt von der Alp im Herbste* (the Journey from the Alps in the Autumn). Johann Rudolf Wyss, a Swiss author who penned the original Swiss national anthem in 1811, also contributed compositions: *Schwyzer-Heimweh* (Swiss Homesickness), and *Was Heimelig syg* (What is Cozy). Wyss, who was also a professor of philosophy at the Bern academy, edited the third edition. In the Foreword he conveyed

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<sup>123</sup> Baumann, 171 (2000).

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 173.



his support for the burgeoning arts movement in Bern. Wyss wrote, “Wir wünschten... Verschiedenes aufzubewahren, und neu zu verbreiten, das im Untergehen war” (We wish to save various things that were in decline, and to circulate the new).<sup>125</sup>

He believed the composition of folkloristic songs forwarded the cause of Swiss national music, and he expressed hope these songs would find a permanent place in Swiss culture.<sup>126</sup>

The fourth edition of the *Sammlung*, written in both French and German, was designed for distribution to foreigners and tourists. The collection was split into two volumes. The first volume contained only the first verse of each folksong with melody and piano accompaniment. The second volume contained the full texts of the same folksongs without musical notation. The edition included forty-four folksongs and twenty-five folkloristic songs by Kuhn and Huber.<sup>127</sup> It also included lithographs that portrayed Swiss peasants dancing, singing, and playing instruments in various nature scenes.<sup>128</sup>

“*Das Lied der Guggisberger*” (The Song of the Guggisberger), the thirty-first song in the fourth edition, is an excellent example of the evolution of a traditional folksong. The song has been enriched texturally from its original form through the addition of both a piano accompaniment (shown below the melody in example 5) and a guitar accompaniment (shown above the melody in example 5). Dramatic interest is added through the addition of tremolos in the left hand of the piano in measures 5 and 6.

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<sup>125</sup> Baumann, 172 (2000).

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 172–173.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 171–173.

<sup>128</sup> Swiss Office for the Development of Trade, 153 (1975).



The addition of accompaniment also enriches the song harmonically. The melody, by itself, implies harmonic changes only from the tonic (a minor) to the dominant (E major). However, the use of G-natural in the piano and guitar in measure 7 creates a harmonic shift to the relative major. Due to the rising interest in public and private music education in Switzerland in the first half of the nineteenth century, the addition of accompaniment, and the resulting increase in harmonic interest, would have increased the popularity of *Das Lied der Guggisberger* among the Swiss people.

Example 5: “*Das Lied der Guggisberger*” (The Song of the Guggisberger), measures 1–8.<sup>129</sup>

The musical score consists of three staves of music. The top staff is for the soprano voice, the middle staff for the bassoon or guitar, and the bottom staff for the bassoon or guitar. The lyrics are written below the notes in German. The first section of lyrics is: "S ist ebe n e Mönchsch uf Er de , Simmeli - berg, s ist ebe . n e Mönchsch uf Erde , Simmeliberg! Und d's Vene li ab em Guggisberg und d's Simes Hans Joggeli äinet dem Berg, siet ebne Mönchsch uf Erde, daß i möcht bý n em sj." The music is in common time, with various key signatures throughout the measures.

<sup>129</sup> Johann Rudolf Wyss and others, eds., *Sammlung von Schweizer Kühreihen und Volksliedern*, 4th ed. (Bern: J.J. Burgdorfer, 1826), microfilm, p. 53, 613:11.



The second volume of the *Sammlung* delineates the song's twelve verses:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. 'S ist ebe-n-e Mönsch uf Erde, Simeliberg!<br>Und d's Vreneli ab-em Guggisberg!<br>Und d's Simes Hans Joggeli änet dem Berg!<br>'S ist ebe-n-e Mönsch uf Erde,<br>Das I möcht by-n-ihm sy. | There is a person on earth, Simeliberg!<br>And Vreneli from Guggisberg!<br>And Simon's lad, Hans, on the other side of the mountain!<br>There is a person on earth,<br>[Such] That I would be with him. |
| 2. U mah-n-er mir nit werbe, Simeliberg!<br>Vor Chummer stirbe-n-i.   | And if he is not attracted to me, Simeliberg! <sup>130</sup><br>I will die of sorrow.   |
| 3. U stirbe-n-i vor Chummer, Simeliberg!<br>So leit me mi i-d's Grab.   | And if I die of sorrow, Simeliberg!<br>So lay me in the grave.  |
| 4. I mynes Büehlis Garte, Simeliberg!<br>Da stah zweu Bäymali.  | In my Büehlis <sup>131</sup> garden, Simeliberg!<br>There stand two young trees.  |
| 5. Das eini treit Muschgate, Simeliberg!<br>Das andri Rägeli.   | The one bears Muschgate, <sup>132</sup> Simeliberg!<br>The other, Rägeli. <sup>133</sup>  |
| 6. Muschgate die sy süsse, Simeliberg!<br>U d'Rägeli sy räss.   | The Muschgate, it is sweet, Simeliberg!<br>And the Rägeli are spicy.  |
| 7. I gab's mym Lieb z'versueche, Simeliberg!<br>Dass 's myner nit vergess   | I gave my love a taste, Simeliberg!<br>[So] That mine (the beloved) won't forget [me].  |
| 8. Ha di no nie vergesse, Simeliberg!<br>Ha-n-immer a di denkt.   | I have never forgotten you, Simeliberg!<br>I have always thought of you.  |
| 9. Es sind nunmehr zweu Jahre, Simeliberg!<br>Dass mi ha-n-a die g'henkt.   | It has been two years, Simeliberg!<br>Since I have been with you.   |
| 10. Dört unte-n-i der Tiefi, Simeliberg!<br>Da steit es Mühlirad.   | There, down in the deep valley, Simeliberg!<br>There stands a millstone.  |
| 11. Das mahlet nüt als Liebi, Simeliberg<br>Die Nact und auch den Tag.  | It grinds nothing but love, Simeliberg!<br>Through the night and also the day.  |
| 12. Das Mühlirad isch broche, Simeliberg<br>Mys Lyd das het e-n-End.  | The millstone is broken, Simeliberg!<br>My song it has an end.  |

Following the verses, a brief explanation of the song's origin is given: *Das Lied der Guggisberger*, originally entitled *Simeliberg*, was a true story originating from the town

<sup>130</sup> The second and third lines of each stanza are identical. The fourth line is always a repetition of the first line. In the interest of space and clarity, lines 2–4 have been omitted from the last eleven stanzas.

<sup>131</sup> Possessive noun of unknown definition. It is either a name or a term of endearment for someone close to Vreneli, possibly her beloved.

<sup>132</sup> Noun of unknown definition. A sweet fruit.

<sup>133</sup> Noun of unknown definition. Not sweet or desirable like *Muschgate*.



of Guggisberg in the canton of Bern. The town's parish priest recorded the song after visiting Hans, the lover and presumed author of the song, on his deathbed.<sup>134</sup> The song tells the story of a woman, Vreneli, who suffers from the unrequited love of a young man, Hans, who lives on the other side of the mountain. The text of *Das Lied der Guggisberger* also embodies certain qualities of the Swiss identity. The town of Guggisberg is near the border of the canton of Fribourg. Hans was likely not a citizen of Bern, but of this neighboring canton. Since there was no unity between the cantons of the old Confederation, a burgeoning love between the hero and heroine would have been frowned upon. Rural citizens showed loyalty only to those cantons of which they were members. In the last verse of the song, the millstone (the symbol for the heart of the heroine, which produced nothing but love for Hans) breaks. The final line, “*Mys Lyd das het e-n-End*” (my song, it has an end) was often sung as “*Die Liebi het en End*” (the love has an end). Together, these two images imply the death of the heroine, not simply the breaking of a heart. Thus, the song underscores the need for unity between the cantons by illustrating the tragic consequences of separation.

In combination with the first two Unspunen festivals, the first four editions of the *Sammlung von Schweizer Kühreihen und Volkslieder* transfigured the life of the Alpine Herdsman into a rural ideal. The arranging of old folksongs and the composition of new folkloristic songs were regarded as praise for cowhands and farming communities. The publication of new folksongs painted a utopian picture of a unified, and musically oriented Switzerland.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Johann Rudolf Wyss, ed., *Texte zu der Sammlung von Schweizer Kühreihen und Volksliedern*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 79–80 (Bern: J.J. Burgdorfer, 1826), digital Google book.

<sup>135</sup> Baumann., 173 (2000).



On August 4, 1825 the first exclusively vocal music festival was held in the canton of Appenzell. It was inspired by the Appenzeller Singing Association, and became a model for all subsequent vocal and choral festivals in Switzerland. Samuel Weishaupt, an Appenzell parish priest, founded and organized the festival. He was the founder of the Appenzeller singing association and other vocal schools across the canton. Weishaupt was also a pioneer of Swiss choral folksong dissemination; he collected folksongs and arranged them for several voices. Vocal festivals continued in 1826, 1827, 1836 and 1842. In 1843, the Swiss Song Association was founded. Citizens of Appenzell, maintaining a strong yodel tradition, became the backbone of this Swiss organization.<sup>136</sup>

Yodels formed a substantial part of the aforementioned folksong collections. Once the functional music of the Alpine herdsman (described as “singing in syllables in alternation between chest voice and falsetto with free time and measure”<sup>137</sup>), yodels became a common element in folkloristic music. Many folksongs had appended yodels that acted as refrains. Other yodels stood separately and were transcribed or composed with or without text. These compositional techniques were gradually introduced into the choral medium. Hans Georg Nägeli was the founder of the choral movement in Switzerland, and one of the most prolific composers of choral repertoire. Nägeli’s work in the choral medium greatly increased the popularity of choral music across Switzerland. However, Swiss folksongs and folkloristic songs played no role in his music. In the canton of Appenzell, where Nägeli’s music was received most enthusiastically, the nature of choral music was altered to incorporate folkloristic elements. Here, choral arrangements of folk and folkloristic songs appeared for the first time. The first yodel

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<sup>136</sup> Baumann, 184–185 (2000).

<sup>137</sup> Swiss Office for the Development of Trade, 159 (1975).



compositions originated with Johann Heinrich Tobler who wrote many folksongs with appended yodels between 1808 and 1828. He arranged a number of these songs for male chorus with a solo yodel voice. The incorporation of the yodel, a definitively Swiss art, legitimized Tobler's newly composed folksongs. Thus, his music was "accepted as a general anchor among the people" (*allgemeine Verankerung im Volk nicht beschiede*).<sup>138</sup> In the last half of the nineteenth century, choral music became inseparably linked with the tradition of Swiss folksong.<sup>139</sup>

Example 6 is an excerpt of a four-part (SSAA) women's choral arrangement of *Das Lied der Guggisberger* by Swiss composer Ernst Levy. In the Introductory Note to the piece, Levy states:

[F]olksongs...are continually in a state of being composed. I took either the version which pleased me most, or made up a new one from different variants. At no time have I made any additions of my own. For the harmonization however I am, of course, wholly responsible.<sup>140</sup>

Thus, this excerpt illustrates perfectly the evolution of Swiss folksong in the twentieth-century. Minor changes have been made to the title, *Das alte Guggisberger Lied* (The Old Guggisberger Song), and the key. It has been transposed up a half step (b<sup>b</sup> minor) from the version in the fourth edition of the *Sammlung* (a minor) to facilitate the use of female voices (see example 5). The melody has also changed slightly. Following the pattern of the old melody, the C in measure 7 should have been repeated. Instead, this is changed to a repetition of the B-flat. Also, the D in measure 8 should have remained flat. A fermata that was not present in the 1826 edition was added to measure 10. These three changes must have been made in earlier editions, since Levy claims to have made no

<sup>138</sup> Max Zulauf, *Das Volkslied in der Schweiz im 19 Jahrhundert*, 55 (Bern: Haupt, 1972).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 153–160, 184.

<sup>140</sup> Levy, 3 (1946).



additions of his own. A change is also made to the time signature of the piece; it has altered from 4/4, to 2/4. The change to a 2/4 time signature increases the frequency of the downbeat and therefore creates a more plodding effect than a 4/4 time signature. This constant plodding motion emphasizes the melancholy of the spurned heroine by depicting her monotonous, directionless wandering on the mountainside. In measures 3 and 6 the time signature is changed to 3/4 in order to accommodate the fermatas. In the 1826 edition, the fermatas in measures 2 and 4 prolong a half note and a quarter note, respectively (see example 5). In Ernst's arrangement, the fermatas in measures 3 and 6 prolong a quarter note and a sixteenth note, respectively (see example 6). These changes emphasize the phrase's asymmetrical rhythm created by the word "*Simelibärg*." The change of time signature also allows the textual stress to occur on the downbeat. These changes are significant in that they are made for performance reasons. They indicate a significant shift in the function of folksongs. Whereas older folksong collections were intended largely for personal enjoyment, Ernst's arrangement shows that folksongs were now intended for public performance.

By far, the most significant change is the song's harmonization. Levy eschews traditional functional harmony in order to create an almost reverential atmosphere. His use of parallel major chords and open fifths evokes the antiquity and grandeur of the Swiss Alps. In the anacrusis to measure 7, Levy uses an unexpected G7 chord (modal mixture of II 6/5 of V) to shift the song into the key region of the dominant (F major). He uses modal mixture again in measure 9; the D major chord on "*Jog*" is a surprise and creates an affectionate atmosphere surrounding the lover, Hans. Levy uses parallel B-flat, C-flat, D-flat, and E-flat major chords in measures 11 and 12 to set the repeated first line



of each verse. This harmonically directionless phrase emphasizes the melancholy nature of the text and unresolved love.

Another important aspect of this edition is the addition of an English poetic translation. Since Levy was living in the United States when he arranged this folksong, the inclusion of alternate English lyrics would have made the piece more accessible to English-speaking choirs. The inclusion of these lyrics also represents an important development in the evolution of Swiss folksong; it indicates a growing global interest in Swiss culture.

Example 6: E. Lévy's "Das alte Guggisberger Lied" (The Old Guggisberger Song),<sup>141</sup> measures 1–15.

The musical score consists of two staves of four voices each. The top staff is in common time (♩ = about 100). The bottom staff is in common time (♩ = about 132). The voices are: Soprano I, Soprano II, Alto I, and Alto II. The lyrics are in German, with English translations provided for some parts. The first section (measures 1-15) includes the following lyrics:

**Soprano I:**

- 1. 'S isch e - be-n-e Mönch uf Är - de, Si - me - li - bärg! 'S isch  
1. There's one on this earth a - bid - ing. Si - me - li - moun! There's

**Soprano II:**

- 1. 'S isch e - be-n-e Mönch uf Är - de, Si - me - li - bärg! 'S isch  
1. There's one on this earth a - bid - ing. Si - me - li - moun! There's

**Alto I:**

- 1. 'S isch e - be-n-e Mönch uf Är - de, Si - me - li - bärg! 'S isch  
1. There's one on this earth a - bid - ing. Si - me - li - moun! There's

**Alto II:**

- 1. 'S isch e - be-n-e Mönch uf Är - de, Si - me - li - bärg! 'S isch  
1. There's one on this earth a - bid - ing. Si - me - li - moun! There's

**Piu mosso (♩ = about 132):**

- 1. e - be-n-e Mönch uf Är - de, Si - me - li - bärg! Und 's Vre - ne - li ab em  
1. one on this earth a - bid - ing. Si - me - li - moun! And Vre - ne - li lives in
- 1. e - be-n-e Mönch uf Är - de, Si - me - li - bärg! Und 's Vre - ne - li ab em  
1. one on this earth a - bid - ing. Si - me - li - moun! And Vre - ne - li lives in
- 1. e - be-n-e Mönch uf Är - de, Si - me - li - bärg! Und 's Vre - ne - li ab em  
1. one on this earth a - bid - ing. Si - me - li - moun! And Vre - ne - li lives in
- 1. e - be-n-e Mönch uf Är - de, Si - me - li - bärg! Und 's Vre - ne - li ab em  
1. one on this earth a - bid - ing. Si - me - li - moun! And Vre - ne - li lives in

<sup>141</sup> Ernst Levy, arr., *Four Folk Songs from Switzerland*, 4–5 (New York: Music Press, Inc., 1946).



Tempo

1. Gug - gis - bär - g und d's Si - mes Hans Jog - ge - li ü - net dem Bär - g. - 'S ich  
 1. Gug - gis - town, But Si - mon's Hans Jog - ge - li on yon - der down. - There's  
 rit.

1. Gug - gis - bär - g und d's Si - mes Hans Jog - ge - li ü - net dem Bär - g. - 'S ich  
 1. Gug - gis - town, But Si - mon's Hans Jog - ge - li on yon - der down. - There's  
 rit.

1. Gug - gis - bär - g und d's Si - mes Hans Jog - ge - li ü - net dem Bär - g. - 'S ich  
 1. Gug - gis - town, But Si - mon's Hans Jog - ge - li on yon - der down. - There's  
 rit.

1. Gug - gis - bär - g und d's Si - mes Hans Jog - ge - li ü - net dem Bär - g. - 'S ich  
 1. Gug - gis - town, But Si - mon's Hans Jog - ge - li on yon - der down. - There's  
 rit.

primo

1. e - be - n - e Mönch w - Är - de, dass ich möcht bi - n. ihm si.  
 1. one on this earth a - bid - ing, Whom I would fain be with.

1. e - be - n - e Mönch w - Är - de, dass ich möcht bi - n. ihm si.  
 1. one on this earth a - bid - ing, Whom I would fain be with.

1. e - be - n - e Mönch w - Är - de, dass ich möcht bi - n. ihm si.  
 1. one on this earth a - bid - ing, Whom I would fain be with.

1. e - be - n - e Mönch w - Är - de, dass ich möcht bi - n. ihm si.  
 1. one on this earth a - bid - ing, Whom I would fain be with.

In, 1906, almost one hundred years after the first edition of the *Sammlung von*

*Schweizer Kühreihen und Volkslied*, the Swiss Society for Folklore was founded. It

renewed interest in the collection and publication of folksongs by establishing the

*Volksliedarchivs*, an archive of Swiss folksongs. Before the archives were founded it was

rare for both the melody and text of a folksong to be transcribed. With few exceptions,

among them the folksong collections previously discussed, only the texts of folksongs

were recorded. Initially, after the founding of the *Volksliedarkivs*, researchers

concentrated on collecting those melodies originating from the German-speaking cantons



of Switzerland. In 1907 the collection of folksongs from the French-speaking cantons was emphasized, and later, folksongs in Rhaeto-Romanic and Italian. These folksongs were published in the *Schriften der Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Volkskunde* (Writings of the Swiss Society for Folklore). Otto von Geyerz, a professor of German literature in Bern, published *Im Röseligart: Schweizer Volkslieder* (In the Garden of Little Roses: Swiss Folksong, an anthology of Swiss-German folksong) in six volumes, between 1908 and 1925. *Im Röseligart* remains the most comprehensive collection of Swiss-German folksongs to date. More than a third of the collection still consists of the contributions of Kuhn and Wyss.<sup>142</sup>

Folkloristic songs were readily accepted as a Swiss national symbol because newly-composed texts upheld traditional Swiss values. Maintaining their long-established principles in a politically and socially unstable Europe was imperative to the Swiss. Folksong texts evoked memories of the “golden Zeitalters, wo Milch und Honig floss” (golden age when milk and honey flowed).<sup>143</sup> They artfully portrayed the Swiss attitudes of “die Angst vor den Kriegswirren, die zunehmende Industrialisierung, Arbeitslosigkeit und Landflucht” (the fear of the chaos of war, increasing industrialization, unemployment and emigration).<sup>144</sup> In his study of Swiss folksong, Schelbert outlines six folksong texts that relate specifically to Swiss emigration. Each of these texts asks a similar question: how could the emigrant leave the Swiss homeland? A discussion of two of the songs will illustrate how Swiss ideals are portrayed in folkloristic poetry.

*Das Auswanderer* (The Emigrant) was written by Emil Breurmann in 1897.

Breurmann writes:

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<sup>142</sup> Baumann, 175 (2000).

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 174.



The first stanza, however, is not from me, but belongs to an older song, which one, however, I do not know. It was once handed to me together with the melody by Mr. Phillip Trüdinger...I wrote the stanzas for an evening of merry-making in the Artists Association of Basel where the song was then sung every Saturday. From there the song became widely known. I was quite surprised, for instance, when at an evening event in Munich I heard my verses intoned by young Swiss who were totally unknown to me.<sup>145</sup>

Breurmann added only two verses to a pre-existing stanza of unknown origin. By 1906 *Das Auswanderer* consisted of seven stanzas; by 1916 it consisted of eleven stanzas. The eight additional stanzas were written by unknown authors. This type of multi-authored contribution is typical of the evolution of folkloristic song. Composers would choose a pre-existing text and superimpose a melody of their creation. Future poets would write additional verses. In this way, the poem's theme stayed relevant to the present day. The first and last stanzas of *Das Auswanderer* illustrate this:

Und willst du hier nicht länger weilen  
im grünen Tal am blauen See?  
Du willst der Heimat Los nicht teilen?  
nicht deines Volkes Who und Weh?  
So wander nach Amerika!  
Ich bleib im Land der Alpen da.

So wühl ein Grab im goldenen Sande,  
Verschmacht am Sakamentostrom!  
Im schönen Schweizerlande,  
bei meinen Vätern will ich ruhn.

And you don't want to stay here any longer  
in the green valley at the blue lake?  
You don't want to share your homeland's fate?  
Not your people's good and bad days?  
So migrate then to America!  
I stay here in the land of the Alps.

So dig a grave in the golden sand,  
pine away at the Sacramento stream!  
In beautiful Switzerland,  
among my fathers I want to rest.

The song is specific to the turn of the twentieth century. Both America and the Sacramento valley are mentioned by name. The poem implies that the emigrant is leaving Switzerland to share in the newly-discovered gold of the west. The scornful and almost caustic feel of the poem communicates a fear of change, and a fear of the new and foreign, but also a tone of great pride of country.

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<sup>145</sup> Schelbert, 81 (2002).



Von Geyrerz's symbols of Swiss mentality are also present in the poem. The beauty of the Swiss landscape is illustrated in the first stanza. Alps in the first stanza are contrasted with the image of lowly American sand in the last stanza. In the poem's fifth stanza, more elements of the Swiss mentality are presented:

Die Väter, die in Unglückstagen  
nie feig aus ihrer heimat flohn,  
die Tell und Winkelriede klagen  
um dich, um den verlorenen Sohn.

The fathers, who in days of misfortune  
never cowardly fled from their homeland  
the Tells and Winkelrieds lament  
for you, the prodigal son.

Pride in the nobility of the Confederation's founding fathers is clearly communicated in this verse. Tell and Winkelried refer to William Tell and Arnold von Winkelried, two legendary heroes of the old Confederation. Devotion to God, the last of von Geyrerz's symbols of Swiss mentality, is implied in the last line of the stanza. The phrase *verlorenen Sohn* (prodigal son) brings to mind the New Testament parable, and underlines the Swiss desire for God's guidance.

The second folksong, *Schweizerheimweh* (Swiss Homesickness), illustrates the concept of *Heimweh* (homesickness). Homesickness was a common theme among folkloristic songs, especially in times of increased emigration. While homesickness effects the immigrant populations of many different cultures, Schelbert indicates that it is felt with particular potency in Swiss culture. He states, "Although probably a universal experience, [homesickness] has been observed above all among the Swiss."<sup>146</sup> For the Swiss, homesickness was more than a feeling of longing or melancholy. It was a "strange and dangerous sickness"<sup>147</sup> that affected the health of the mind and body. The concept of homesickness is directly connected with the Swiss notion of *heimat* (homeland). Homeland is the *Landschaft* (landscape) of one's birth. As one matures, an unbreakable

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<sup>146</sup> Schelbert, 85 (2002).

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 85.



bond is formed with the surrounding landscape. Separation from the landscape of one's youth causes an emotional impact one's consciousness. "No other *Landschaft* can replace that original experience that tends to remain normative and provides a unique rootedness."<sup>148</sup> Johann Rudolf Wyss wrote the poem *Schweizerheimweh* in 1811, a year before the melody was composed. The poem's second and last stanzas portray the impact of the absence of Swiss homeland on the mind of the emigrant:

Ach, is Heimet möcht i wieder,  
Aber bald, du Liebe, bald,  
Möcht zum Aetti, möcht' zum Müetli,  
Möcht zu Berg und Fels und Wald.

Herz, mys Herz! i Gottes Name,  
's ist es Lyde, gib di dri!  
Will's der Herr, so cha-ner helfe,  
Dass mer bald im Heimet sy.

Ah, I want to be at home again,  
but soon, you dearest, soon  
want to father, want to mother,  
Want to mountain and rock and wood.

Heart, my heart! in God's name,  
it is pain, but do give in!  
If the Lord wants, he can help  
that we will soon be back home.

Once more, the love of the Alpine landscape and the Swiss dependence on God are central themes of the poem. In the first stanza shown, the emigrant longs to return to the mountains, rocks, and forests (the essence of the Swiss *heimat*) as he would a mother or father. In the second stanza shown, the emigrant acknowledges that, with the help of God, he may one day return to his homeland.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, a variety of folksong collections that presented Swiss folksong from different perspectives were published. In 1980, two hundred and twenty traditional songs in all four of Switzerland's languages (German, French, Italian, Romansh) were released in one book, the *Hausbuch der Schweizer Volkslieder* (House-Book of Swiss Folksong). Another collection, *Die Schönste Schwiezer Volkslieder* (The Most Beautiful Swiss Folksongs) borrowed many songs from the *Hausbuch*, but outlined the historical, geographical and sociopolitical context

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<sup>148</sup> Schelbert, 86 (2002).



surrounding the origin of each song. Today, numerous ethnic Swiss interest groups continue to be involved in the cultivation of folksong, folk singing, yodels, and dances.<sup>149</sup> While there has been a decline in the popularity of solo performance, “every village has its choral society in which folksongs are still sung.”<sup>150</sup> Local and national folk festivals remain the most important venues for the celebration of Swiss folk music. Combining Swiss folk music with traditional dance, and elaborate pageantry, these spectacles continue to be a defining element of Swiss culture.

The evolution of the Swiss identity was long and complex, developing over the course of seven centuries. Religious, social, and political circumstances played central roles in its evolution. As a manifestation of Swiss mentality, Swiss folksong evolved in conjunction with that mentality. Newly-composed folkloristic songs became an accepted symbol of Swiss nationality for two reasons: first, they were written by Swiss philosophers and composers and thus were considered Swiss inventions; second, folkloristic songs upheld traditional Swiss values in the social and political turmoil of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe. Folkloristic music continued to represent a strong, proud mountain culture, created by noble herdsmen, guided by God, and preserved by tradition.

Marchal states that a culture defines itself through the use of symbols (in this case, folksong), and that a culture’s identity is related to the context of those symbols. In other words, Swiss folksongs themselves do not create the Swiss identity. Rather, Swiss identity is defined by how the Swiss create, use and interpret those folksongs in a sociopolitical and historical context. The Swiss, “hearing with [their] own particular

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<sup>149</sup> Baumann, 176 (2000).

<sup>150</sup> Swiss Office for the Development of Trade, 160 (1975).



sensitivities” (hörend und mit [ihren] jeweiligen Befindlichkeit assoziierend)<sup>151</sup> give Swiss folksong its meaning. The establishment of new folksongs as national symbols characterizes the Swiss mentality more than any folksong. It underlines the fundamental Swiss value of cultural preservation through the creation of songs and legends. Indeed, the invention of tradition is the most Swiss trait of all.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Marchal, 274 (2000).

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 273–274.



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